

The Anonymous and the Specific in Architecture

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ABSTRACT

The definition of the anonymous and the specific is an issue of personal choice and only when it becomes a personal choice can it be a controllable switching mechanism of observation and a practical methodology of design. But what are the values of an anonymous subject? To answer this question, I adopted Rawls's concept of Comprehensive Doctrines. I applied a similar concept that is practical in architectural field, namely, the anonymous and the specific. The definition of the theory is that an anonymous subject is a set of beliefs affirmed by precedents concerning a range of values as well as beliefs about architectural virtues and philosophical beliefs about the way architecture ought to be arranged. Multiple values are organized and compatible in an anonymous subject. In addition, the anonymous subject gives us a view of what is a good architecture that is understandable and practical. In order to enable different anonymous subject to coexist, a freestanding and inclusive specific frame should be designed. It should focus on articulating and defending a clear frame instead of testifying the anonymous subjects. I explored the concept in three courses. Two of them narrowed down the concept into the anonymous structure and specific environment. And the other one narrowed down the concept into the anonymous techniques and the specific policies. In this cases, I tried to explain the values behind the anonymous subjects and the process of designing or recognizing a specific frame so that plurality of anonymous subjects can coexist in it.

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THE ANONYMOUS AND THE SPECIFIC IN ARCHITECTURE

The contradiction between the anonymous and the specific is something that I discovered in this year. The first question would be defining his concept. The definition of the anonymous and the specific is not unchangeable, which means there are no absolute anonymous or absolute specific subjects. Someone might argue that the quantity matters, when there is only one version of the object, it must be special and specific; some might insist that quality matters, the best one of a mass should be the specific one; some might also relate it to people's experience, obviously when something is common for someone, it will easily be anonymous, which means the definition varies among different people and by different criteria. For me, I admit that if there is any definition that can tell them apart, it will be subjective. However, people can choose a specific one from an anonymous mass or take something special as anonymous. It is an issue of personal choice and only when it becomes a personal choice can it be a controllable switching mechanism of observation and a practical methodology of design. But what are the values of an anonymous subject?

To answer this question, it is helpful to look at a philosophical term in Rawls's theory in political field, namely, the comprehensive doctrine. A comprehensive doctrine is a set of beliefs affirmed by citizens concerning a range of values, including moral, metaphysical, and religious commitments, as well as beliefs about personal virtues, and political beliefs about the way society ought to be arranged. There are several components to this

concept, according to Rawls. First, multiple values are organized and compatible with each other in a single comprehensive doctrine. Second, for ordinary people, a comprehensive doctrine conveys a view of world that is understandable and practical. Although most people cannot come up with a perfect answer for the question about what is good, or what is of value in life, each comprehensive doctrine gives one or more than one answers to people as reference. Furthermore, for some people, they are answers per se. Third, the fact that citizens affirm different and incompatible comprehensive doctrines presents a problem for a theory of justice, because it suggests that citizens will fail to agree on principles of justice to govern their institutions if they rely exclusively on their separate and incompatible comprehensive doctrines. Rawls addresses this problem by distinguishing between two points of view, one the comprehensive doctrines mentioned above, the other a freestanding political view, in which does not affirm or deny any particular comprehensive doctrines. It provides an inclusive frame for a plurality of comprehensive doctrines to coexist. A reasonable social system should focus on articulate and defend a clear freestanding political view instead of testifying comprehensive doctrines.

When we use the anonymous to replace the comprehensive doctrines and use the specific to replace the freestanding political view, the political concept can be perfectly translated into architecture and even other fields. I explored this concept in two option studios, along with some of the electives of last two semesters.

Anonymous Structure and Specific Environment

Material Matters is the Option Studio I took in 18 Fall, the instructor of which is Alejan-

dro Beals and Loreto Lyon. It is an Ithaca-based studio. The studio included three sections. The first section was to identify a specific environment in the city of Ithaca, which was celebrated. The second section was to find and study an anonymous structure that is common in Ithaca. The last section was to use the anonymous structure as a media to represent the specific environment.

For the first section, we identified a specific environment that could be celebrated. Through this process a freestanding frame as the final goal was articulated. I identified a spot in the Wildflower Garden, which was full of tall trees that blocked the sun. However, one of the biggest trees was cut down, creating a hole in the canopy and allow the light to cast down on the stump. Its trunks were surrounding the stump. The scene gave me a sacred sense.

The second section, finding and studying an anonymous object, was the process of identifying the comprehensive doctrine. I chose utility poles as my subject. The height of the column, the angle of the fixing cables and the arrangement of the position of the poles are all internal to the structure, and ensures it works. This reflects the first fact of my theory; each value and elements are compatible inside the anonymous structure. In addition, the structure is understandable, both verbally and practically. Verbally, this means when we talk about utility poles, we conceptualize the whole structure, without needing to name each part. Practically, this means we can directly apply this structure without having a deep and entire understanding of how it works. The utility pole is common in Ithaca which is subject to provide a reference for us about what is a good and valuable answer in this specific environment, heavy snow and strong wind during the winter.

The third section, translating the natural environment into an architecture by using the anonymous structure. In this process we needed to articulate and defend a specific environment and program as a freestanding frame that allow the anonymous structure to fit in without damaging its core value. In this project, I tried to preserve the elements like the columns and cables and the relationship between elements, the tension and the configuration of poles.

The next opportunity to explore the anonymous and specific concept is the Design-to-Build Option Studio in 19 Spring, instructed by Mark Cruvellier, Dagur Eggertsson and Sami Rintala. This project was located in the Treman Center, Ithaca, a manor with a big red barn. We were asked to identify a specific place inside our clients' manor and discuss with them to decide the program of the structure. We used wood and stone constructions, which are the existing language in the manor. In this project, the barn here is wood structure based on stone foundation. In addition, there are many stone walls located here because the client is one of the best stonemasons in Ithaca. In both the stone construction and wood construction, all the construction details along with the logic of building embed are compatible. These existing constructions also provided us with a practical approach to this site, which have been tested here. Furthermore, the existing constructions are understandable but there are also potential values behind them. For example, the stone wall construction conveyed the facts that the clients were familiar with stone, that kind of stone is common in New York state, that stone is good material for resisting snow water and moisture etc. The wood construction we learn from the barn also had a story behind it. In fact, the barn was not brand new, but an old structure from another

site that was dismantled and rebuilt here. Before knowing these facts, there constructions were simple anonymous structures, but this didn't prevent us to use it. Presented in front of us as anonymous structures were the subjects could be studied and applied, demonstrating the meaning and value of the concept of "understandable."

Anonymous Techniques and Specific Policies

I also got to explore this concept in one of the electives I took in 19 Spring, Sustainable Building, instructed by Jonathan Ochshorn. This class interested me because it helped me to switch my ideas about sustainability from techniques to policies and revalue the criteria set by LEED. In this class, we needed to carefully think about the existing LEED code, how it needs to be rearticulated so that it can provide a clear frame in which anonymous techniques can be applied without damaging the value or original intention of these techniques. One of the big problem in the existing LEED is that the assessment is still based on checking the applications of the existing techniques. This assessment criteria are problematic because it discourages the adoption of new techniques, In addition, the LEED assessment need to be updated frequently to ensure they are up to date. What is more, how to weight the performances of different techniques has already aroused severe criticism.

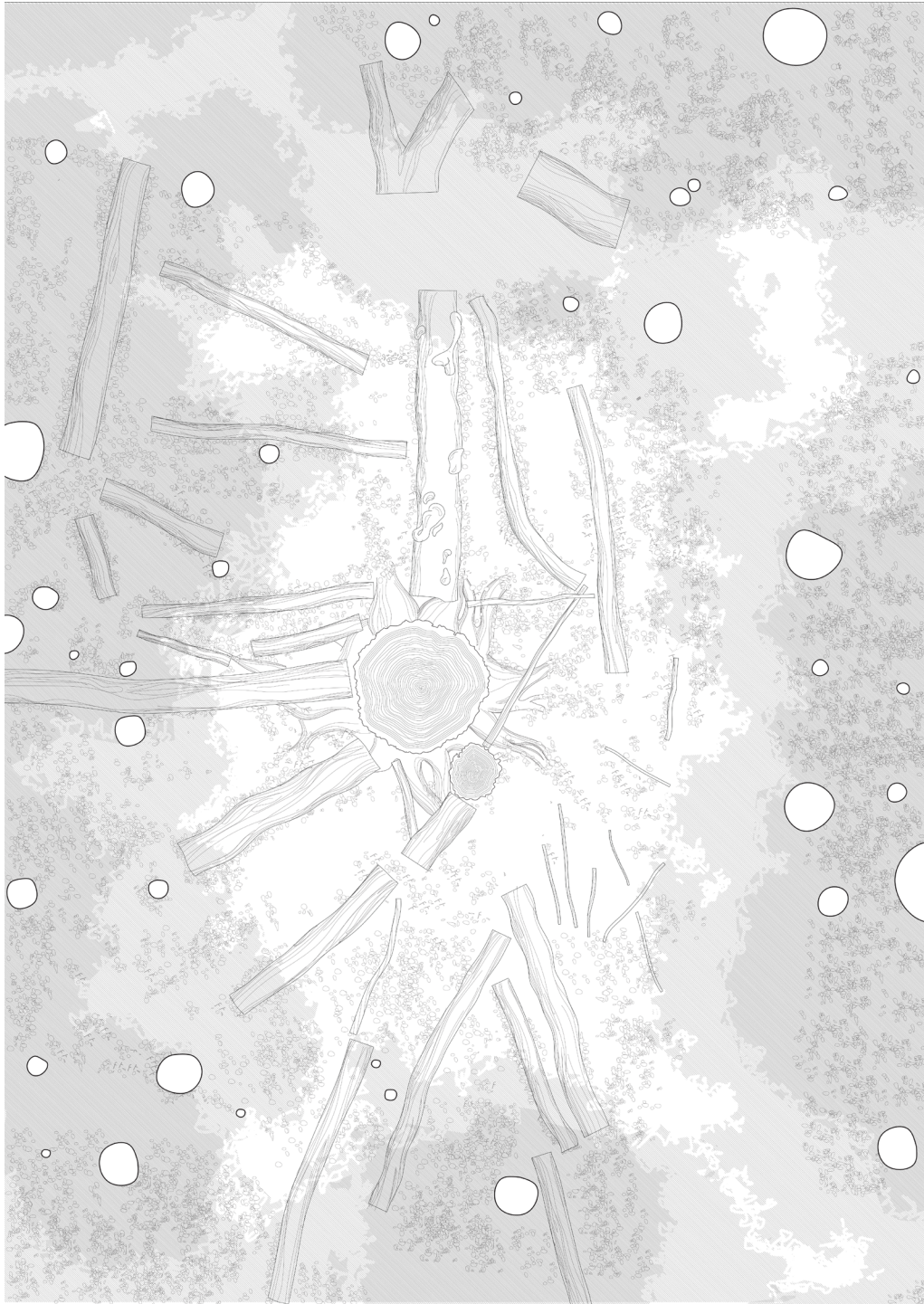
Reasonable criteria should be performance based, which means we only need to exam the final result. It can provide fair platform and freestanding frame for those anonymous techniques to work. On the other hand, the criteria should cancel the weighting process, because according to Rawls's theory, a freestanding and separate frame should not testify the value of each technique.

Reference

Paul Voice. (2014). *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon* (pp. 126-129). Cambridge University Press

18 Fall Option Studio Material Matters

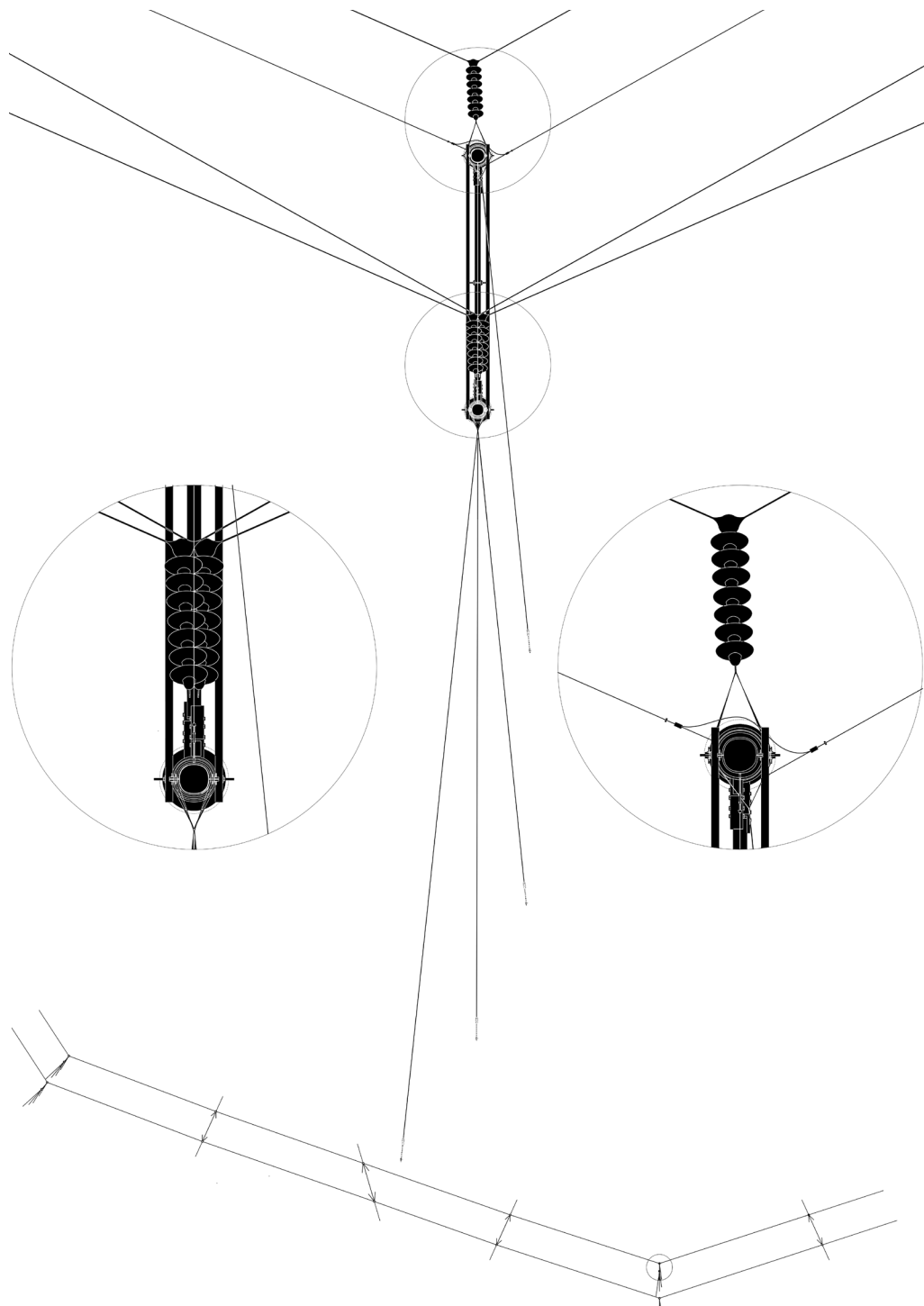
Instructor: Alejandro Beals, Loreto Lyon



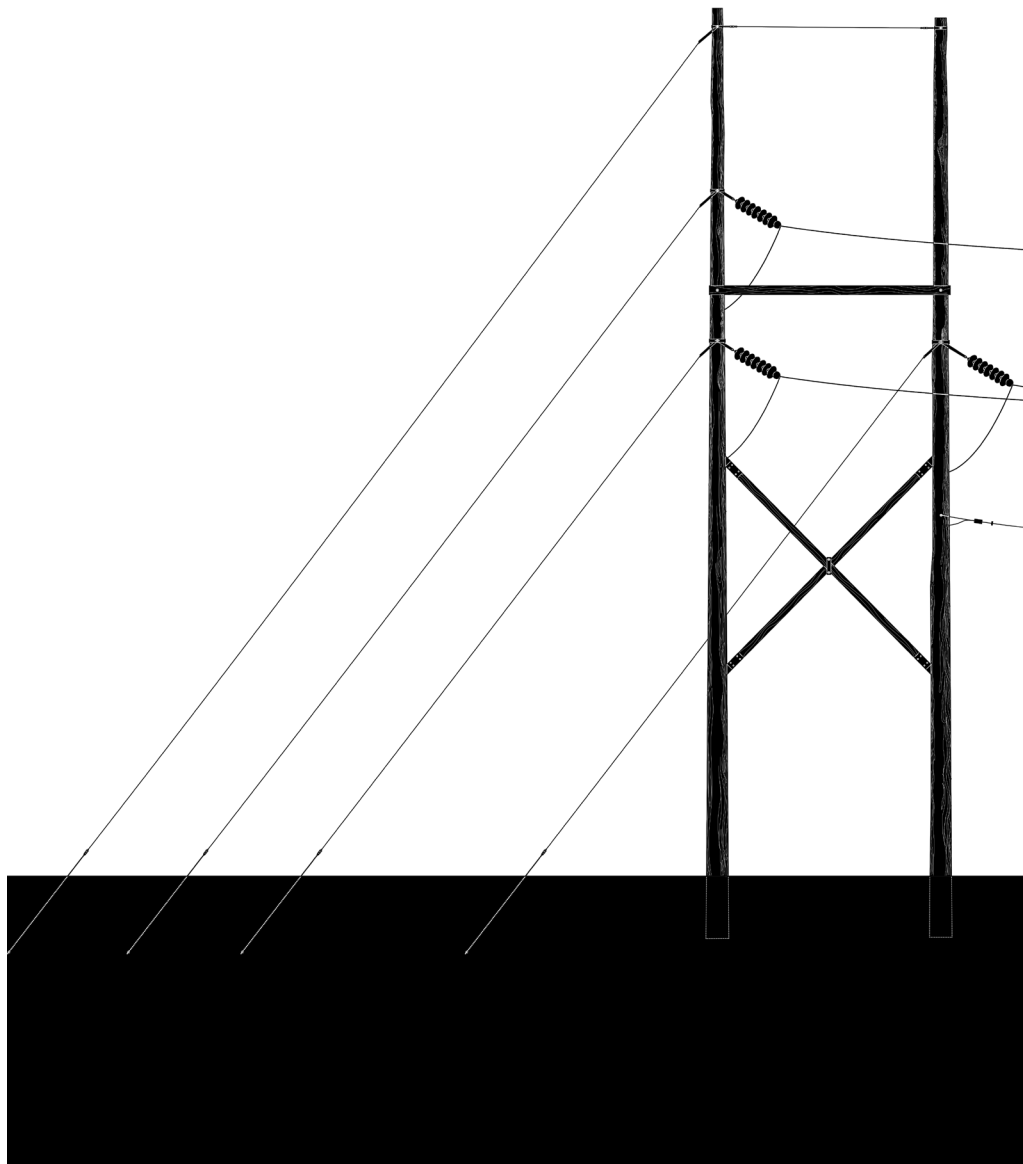
Environment Plan



Environment Section



Utility Pole Plan



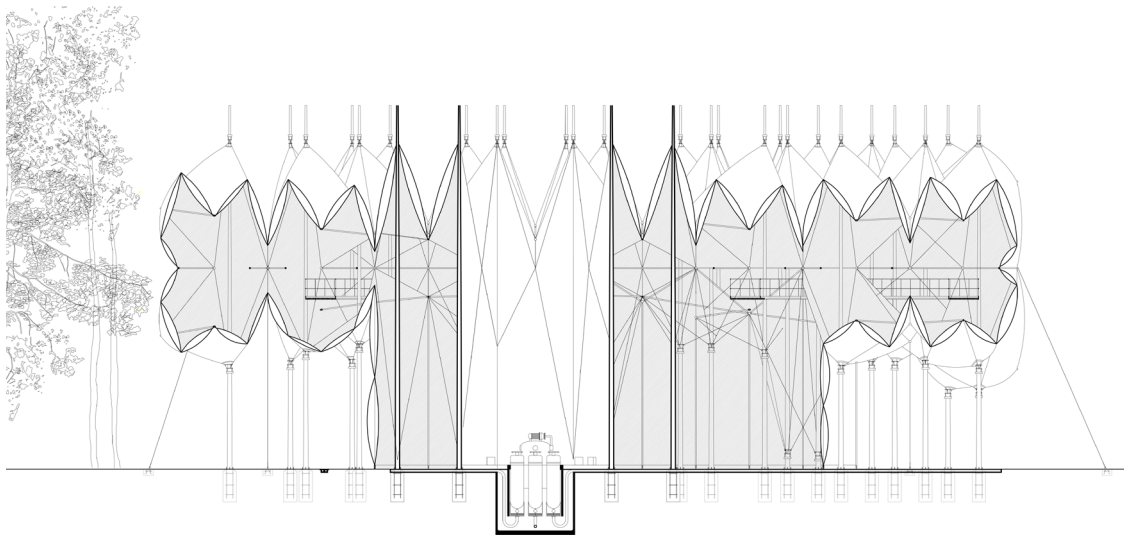
Utility Pole Section



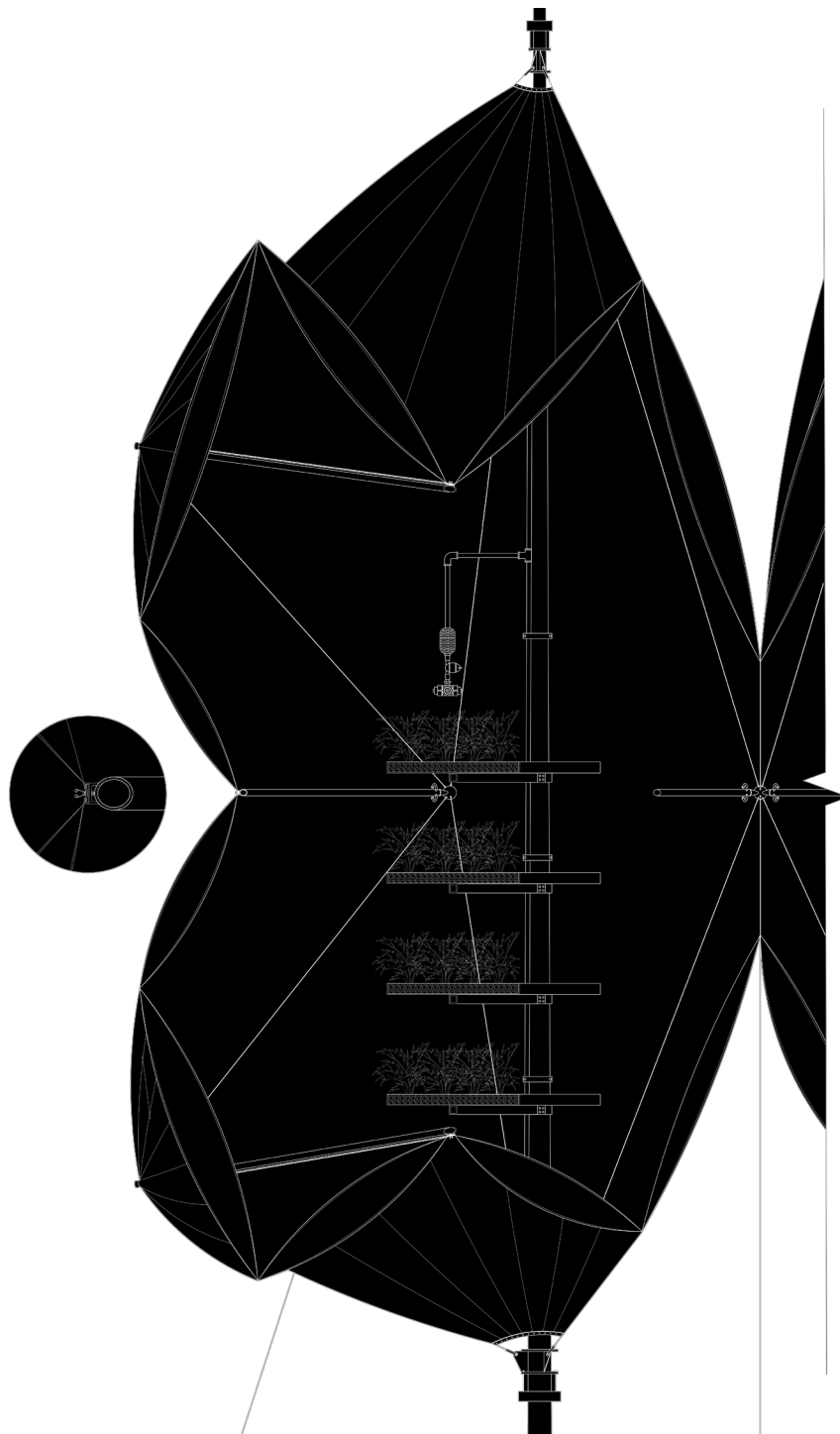
Site Plan



Ground Plan



Section



Detail Section

19 Spring Option Studio Design to Build

Instructor: Mark Cruvellier, Dagur
Eggertsson, Sami Rintala



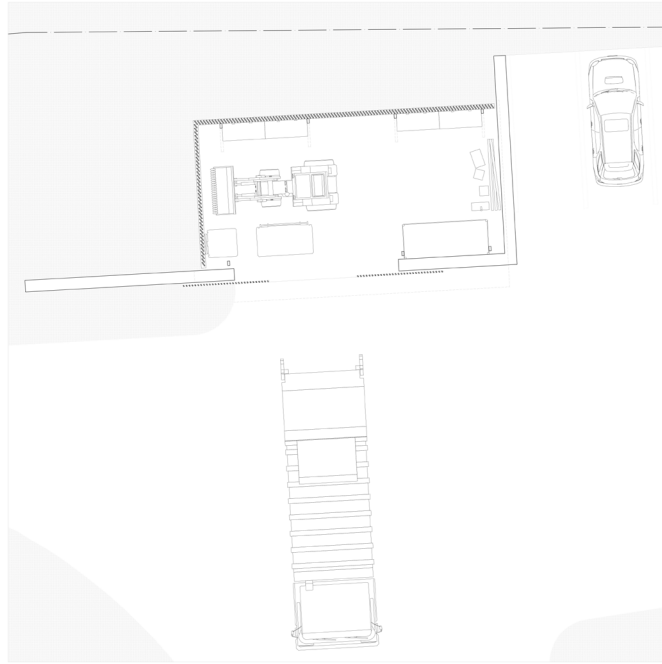
Perspective Section



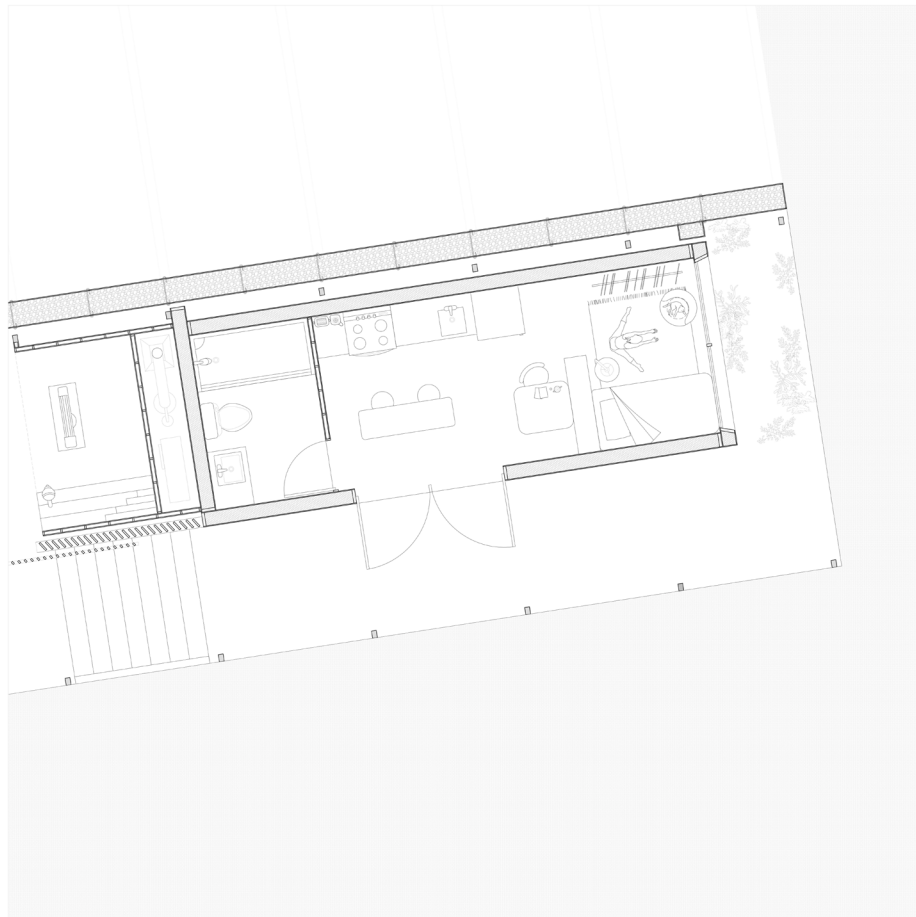
Perspective



Phasing Plan



Zoom-in Plan



Zoom-in Plan

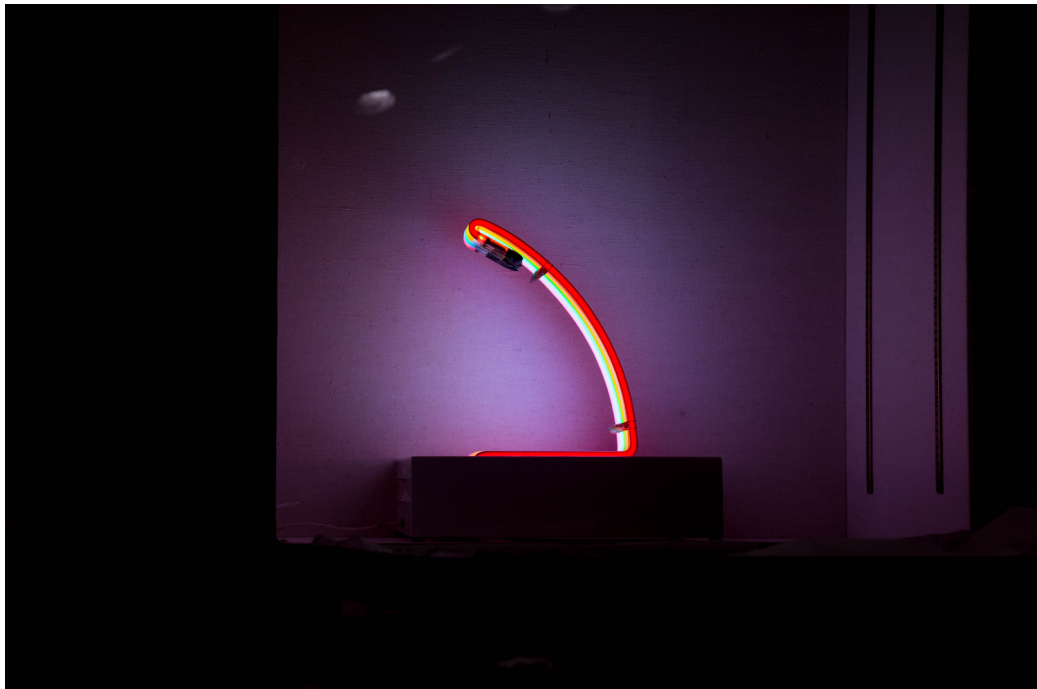


18 Fall Elective
Cities Dark and Light

Instructor: Mary Woods



Reception Day



Works

"It often seems to me that the night is much more alive and richly colored than the day." Vincent Van Gogh, 1888

This exhibition explores the pleasures of the night facilitated by different kinds of electric light. From colorfully lit night clubs to dimly lit restaurants, the activities of the night, staged with the city as its backdrop, call for everyone to participate, unpacking diverse social dynamisms. The pleasures of the night suggest themes of romanticism, promiscuity, and modernity. Although all are invited to participate, roles and agency at night are heavily determined by gender: the sensibilities of women are revealed through illumination of street lamps and the eyes of spectators. While some participate, some perform, and some run away from a fearful night, others prepare for its dangers and wonders.

"A great city never sleeps." Gérard de Nerval, 1852

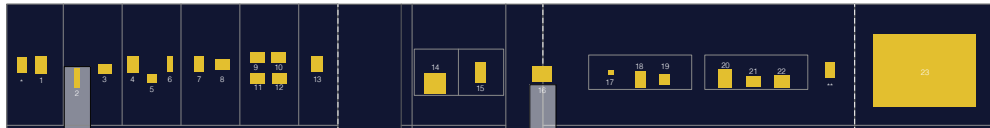
Night-time pleasures reside in technological advancements of electricity, in consumption of mass media and pop culture, and in the sensorial spaces of nightclubs, theaters and cinemas. The accompanying costs of pleasures disclose themselves on a quiet night ride at a gas station stop or a sudden loneliness by the closed door of a restaurant. You are invited to participate in these sensorial experiences, engaging with the pleasures of the night through this exhibition. The exhibition follows the chronology of night from dusk to dawn. It highlights initial preparations for the night, climaxing at chaotic and vivid gatherings, and finally winding down to moments of isolated intimacy and reflection.

Thanks especially to Professor Mary N. Woods for manifold guidance and instruction; to Leah Sweet, Andrea Inselmann, B. J. Woodams, Andrea Potochniak, Wil Millard and David E. Ryan at the Johnson Museum for assistance and support; to guest speakers Dr. Brinda Somaya, Professor Sandy Isenstadt, Professor Iflikhar Dadi, Jeffrey L. Lapor, and Dr. Annie Schentag for bringing professional perspectives to the class.

Poster/invitation: Sarah Dujnowski
Installation design: Xiaoxue (Trix) Ma
Brochure: Su Yeon Chi and Haoming Wu
Checklist: Jeannette Pang and Caitlin Zhang

**Herbert F. Johnson
Museum of Art
Cornell University**
114 Central Avenue
Ithaca, New York 14853
607 255-6464

Charles Baskerville
American, 1896-1994
Party invitation
Watercolor on wove paper
Gift of the artist, Class of 1919
95.027.022



CHECKLIST

* Primary Text

1. Charles Baskerville
American, 1896-1994
Party invitation
Watercolor on wove paper
Gift of the artist, Class of 1919
95.027.022
2. Claes Oldenburg
American, born 1929
Tilting Neon Cocktail
Mixed media
Gift of Isabel and William Berley,
Classes of 1947 and 1945
99.078.019
3. Auguste Louis Lepère
French, 1849-1918
Le Palais de Justice
Color woodcut
Bequest of William P. Chapman,
Jr., Class of 1895
62.0341
4. William Klein
American, born 1928
Selwyn, 42nd Street, New York,
1955 (negative), 1990 (print)
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Arthur Penn, Class of 1956,
and Marilyn Penn
91.093.014
5. Thurman Rotan
American, 1903-1991
**Four Devils (View of Times
Square at night)**, ca. 1930
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Jonathan Stein, Class of
1966
83.104.009

6. Georges Meunier
French, 1869-1942
**Papier à Cigarettes Job (Ciga-
rette advertisement)**, 1894
Color lithograph
Gift of Harry A. Starr
76.093.067
7. Cindy Sherman
American, born 1954
Untitled (Queen of Hearts), 1988
(negative), 1994 (print)
Chromogenic print
Gift of Andy Grundberg, Class of
1969, and Merry Forester, MA 1981
2007.102.004
8. Henri Cartier-Bresson
French, 1908-2004
**American businessmen at the bar
of the American Club, Shanghai,**
1949
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Gary Davis, Class of 1976
2012.046.004
9. Jacques Lowe
American, born Germany,
1930-2001
**Performers on stage at El Morocco
nightclub**, 1958
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Claudia Schwartz, Class
of 1983, and Steven L. Schwartz,
Class of 1981
2017.050.008
10. Jacques Lowe
American, born Germany,
1930-2001
**Performers on stage at El Morocco
nightclub**, 1958
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Claudia Schwartz, Class
of 1983, and Steven L. Schwartz,
Class of 1981
2017.050.008

11. Jacques Lowe
American, born Germany,
1930-2001
**Manager of El Morocco night-
club flirting with performer
wearing a fur stole**, 1958
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Claudia Schwartz, Class
of 1983, and Steven L. Schwartz,
Class of 1981
2017.050.009
12. Jacques Lowe
American, born Germany,
1930-2001
**Manager of El Morocco night-
club laughing with performer
wearing a fur stole**, 1958
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Claudia Schwartz, Class
of 1983, and Steven L. Schwartz,
Class of 1981
2017.050.009
13. William Klein
American, born 1928
Model and street lamp, 1957
(negative), 1981 (print)
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Arthur Penn, Class of 1956,
and Marilyn Penn
90.054.029
14. Billy Apple
New Zealand, born 1935
Rainbow 10, 1965
Neon lights and porcelain enamel
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles B.
Rosenak
74.023
15. Unidentified artist
Indonesian, Java
**Shadow puppet representing
Setyaki**
Buffalo leather, buffalo horn

16. Nam June Paik
Korean, 1932-2006
Global Groove, 1973
Single-channel digitized video
from Beta tape (color, sound)
Originally acquired with funds
provided by the New York State
Council on the Arts
Digitally remastered video acquired
through the Jarett F. Wait, Class
of 1980, and Younghee Kim-Wait
Endowment for Korean Arts, 2011
74.046.005 a
17. Berenice Abbott
American, 1898-1991
**[Evening window shoppers on
8th Street]**, 1935-54 (negative); ca.
1980 (print)
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Arthur Penn, Class of 1956,
and Marilyn Penn
85.068.377
18. Yoshida Hiroshi
Japanese, 1876 - 1950
A Restaurant at Night, 1933
Color woodblock print
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. C. Arthur
Bratton in honor of Miss Angie
Crew
74.047.002
19. Larry Fink
American, born 1941
**Boeing, Blue Horizon, Philadel-
phia, PA**, #12-33
January 1990 (negative); 1999
(print)
Gelatin silver print
Acquired through the generosity of
Edward and Zita Rosenthal
99.029.002

20. Robert Doisneau
French, 1912-1994
**Le muguet du miroir, from the
portfolio Robert Doisneau**, 1953
(negative), 1979
Gelatin silver print, Edition 13/100
Gift of Frederick J. Myerson
82.091.014
21. Max Yavno
American, 1911-1985
**Untitled, from the Los Angeles
Documentary Project**, 1979-80
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Albert A. Dorskind, Class of
1943, JD 1948
82.099.008.001
22. Mary Ross
American, 1950-2012
Runaway, Las Vegas, 1979
Silver dye bleach print (video
generated)
Acquired through the Membership
Purchase Fund
80.053.001
23. Gregory Crewdson
American, born 1962
**Untitled, from the series Beneath
the Roses**, 2005
Digital chromogenic print
Edition 3/6
The Ames Family Collection of
Contemporary Photography
2005.031

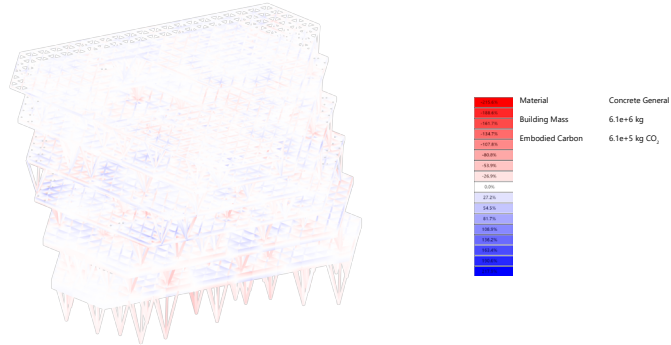
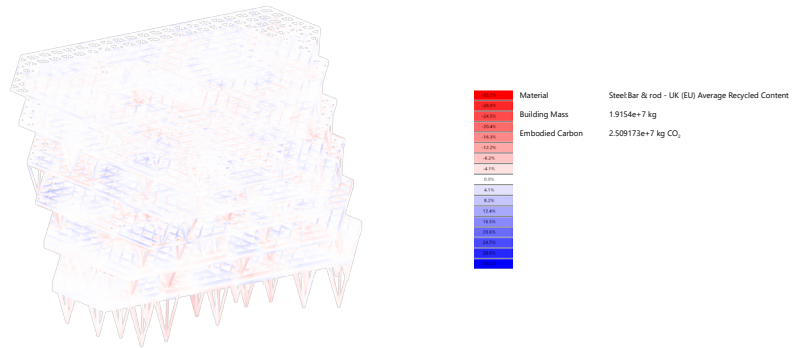
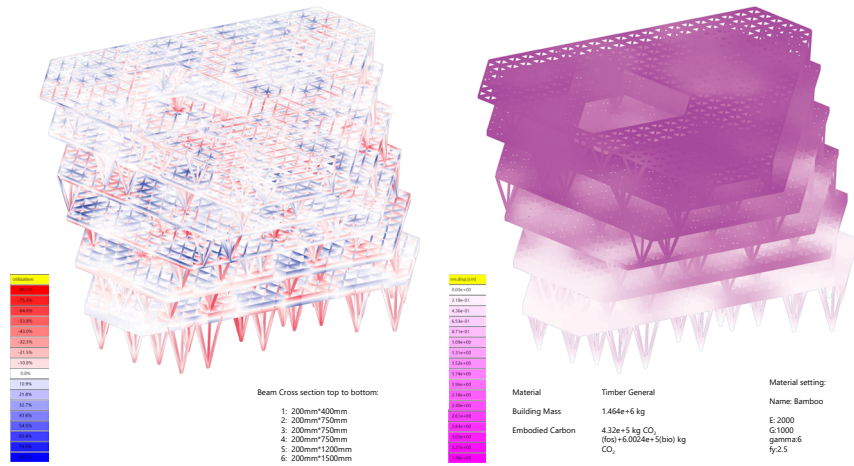
Related Works on Display
Elsewhere in the Museum

- Matthew McCaslin
American, born 1957
Butterfly, 1994
Electric cables and fluorescent
lights
Gift of Nicholas Patti, Sr.
2003.073.004
Lobby
- Ather Albin Müller
German, 1871-1941
Cigarette Lighter, 20th century
Brass
Gift of Isabel and William Berley,
Classes of 1947 and 1945
99.078.142
Visible storage gallery, Floor 2L
- Sarah Brayer
American, born 1957; lives and
works in Japan
Oceanic Moon
2011
Five panel washi paper work with
luminescent pigment and aquatint
Acquired through the generosity of
Judith Stokov, Class of 1963
2012.058, a-e
Moon Exhibition, Floor 2L

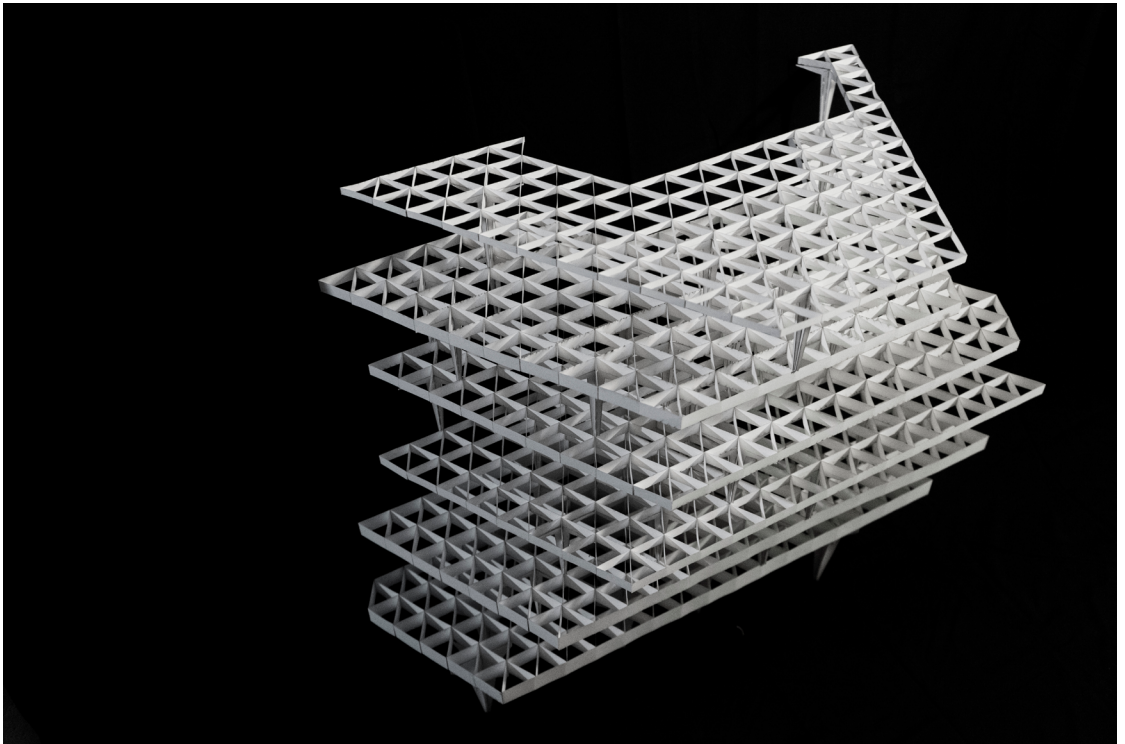
Brochure

18 Fall Elective
Rethinking Timber System

Instructor: Katharina Kral



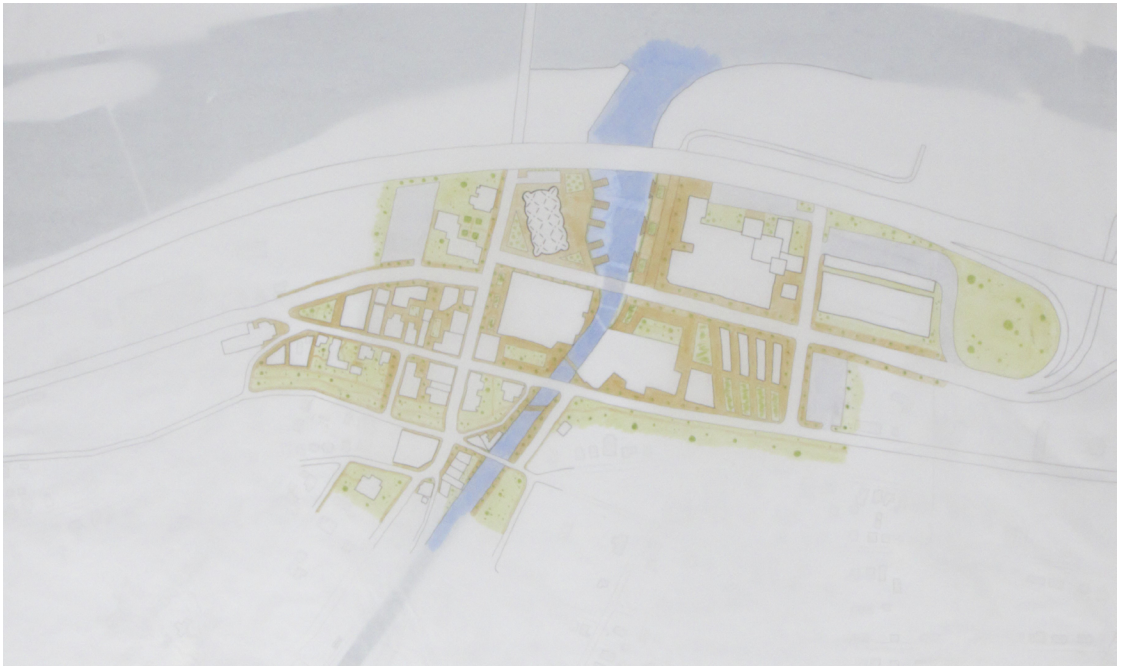
Karamba Simulaiton



Model

**19 Spring Elective
Canajoharie Workshop**

Instructor: Mitchell Glass



Concept Plan



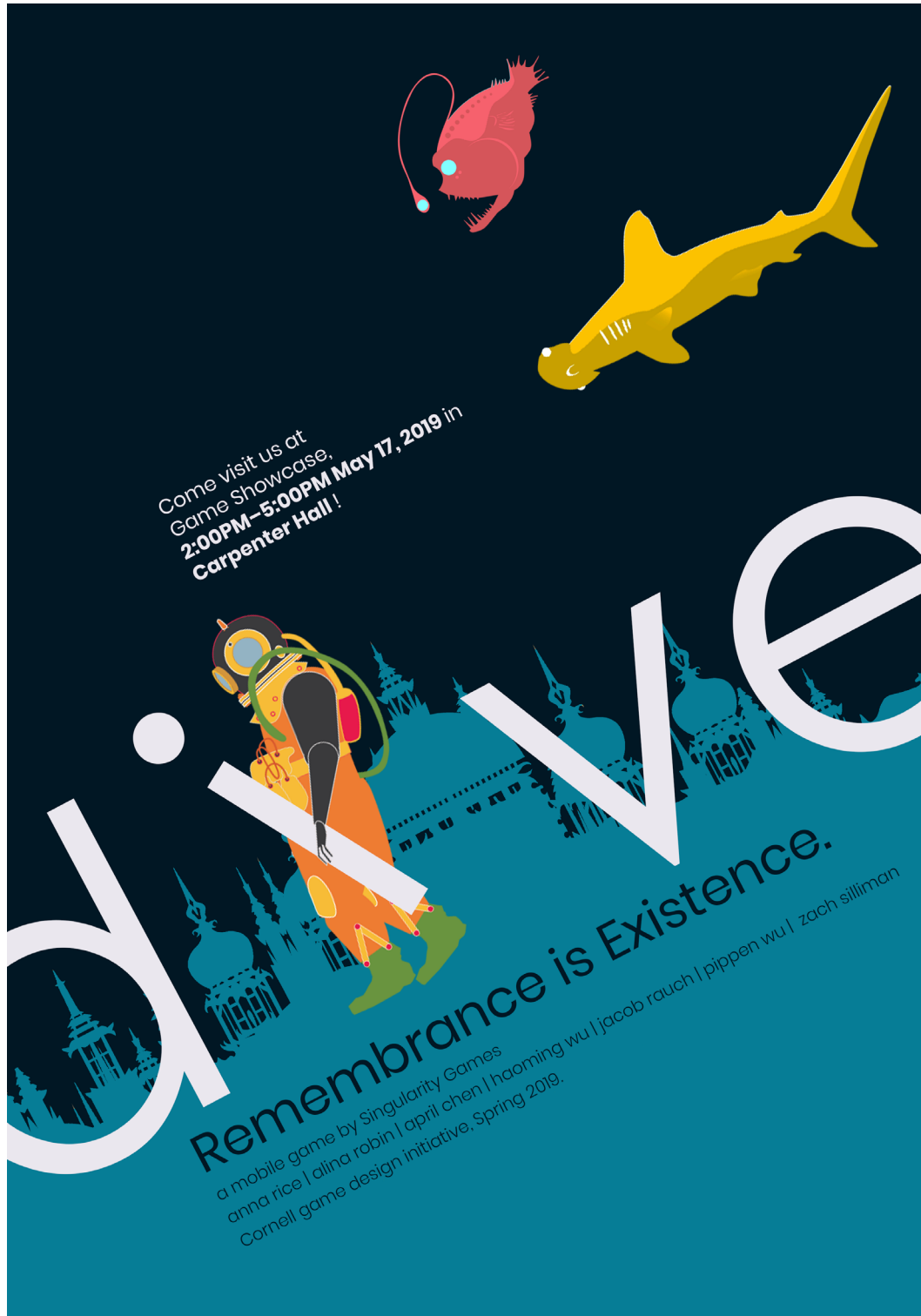
Isometric View



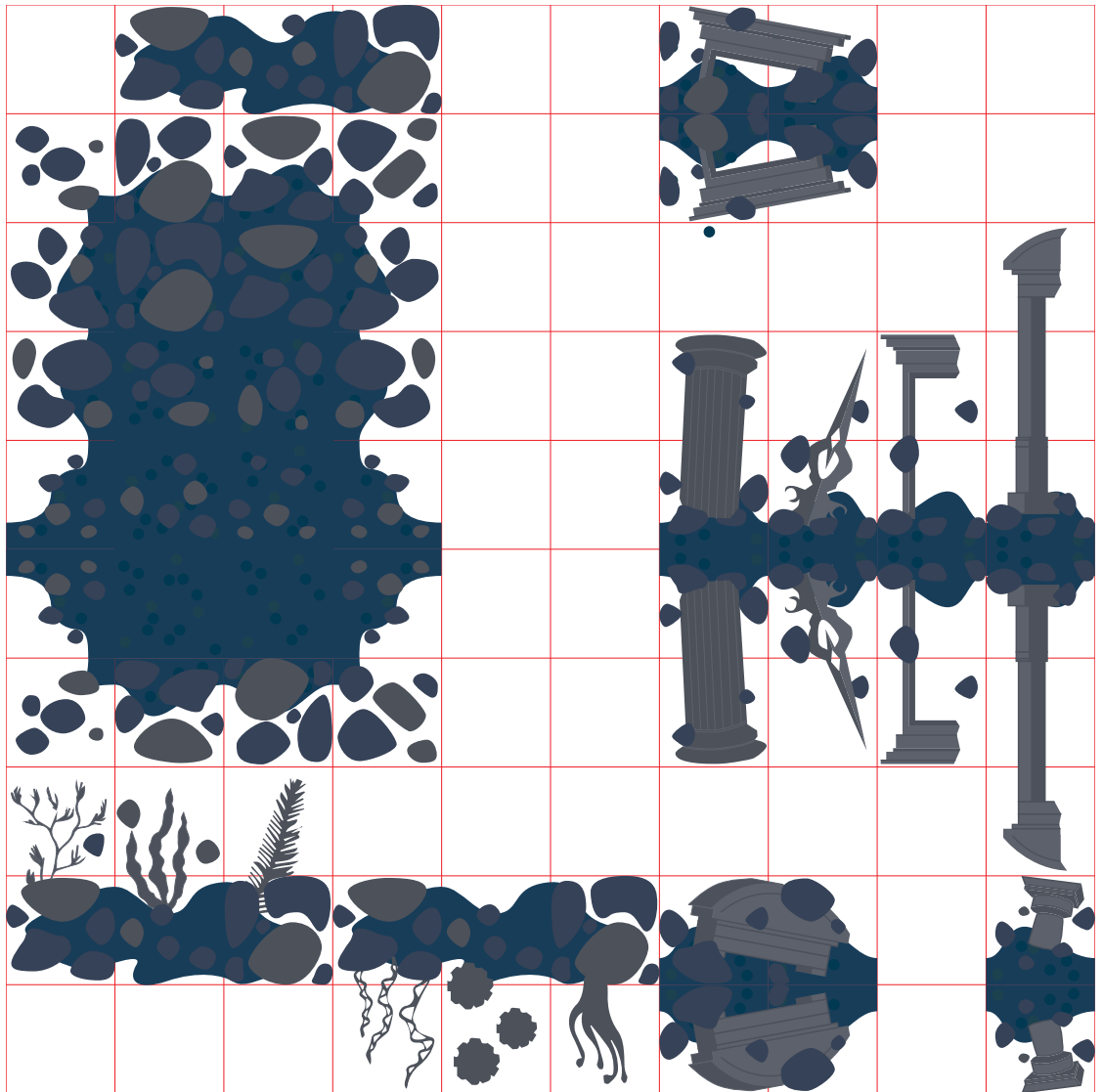
Perspective

19 Spring Elective
Advanced Topics in Computer Game
Architecture

Instructor: Mitchell Glass



Poster Design



Tileset



Character Design